



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

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**PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS PROVING EFFECTIVE IN FIGHTING GUN
CRIME LOCALLY, NATIONALLY**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton joined Attorney General John Ashcroft in applauding the record of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and communities who are working together through Project Safe Neighborhoods to prevent and prosecute gun crime.

"Newly released data shows record-levels of federal prosecutions of gun crime," said Attorney General Ashcroft. "Gun criminals are paying unprecedented penalties, and law-abiding Americans are enjoying unprecedented safety. Under President Bush's leadership, Project Safe Neighborhoods is making a tremendous difference in ensuring that gun crime means hard time."

A Record of Increased Prosecutions. In the past three years, federal gun crime prosecutions nationwide have increased by 68 percent. Between FY 2002 and FY 2003, federal firearms prosecutions increased nearly 24 percent.

Federal offenders are being sentenced to significant jail time. In FY 2003, 93 percent of defendants were sentenced to some prison time, and about 72 percent of offenders were sentenced to prison terms greater than three years.

U.S. Attorney Sutton noted that in the Western District of Texas, Project Safe Neighborhoods prosecutions have risen more than 70% since FY2000. "The message today to those carrying guns unlawfully is that there will be a high price to pay—as a result the citizens of West Texas will be safer," said U.S. Attorney Sutton.

A Drop in Violent Crime Victimization. The increased emphasis on prevention and prosecution of gun crimes makes our communities safer by ensuring that those who abuse firearms are not free to prey on our citizens. Between 1999-2000 and 2001-2002, the violent crime victimization rate plunged 21 percent. Approximately 130,000 fewer Americans were victims of gun crime in 2001-2002 than in 1999-2000.

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National Scope, Local Impact. Project Safe Neighborhoods is an unprecedented partnership between all levels of government to implement a national strategy to attack gun crime with focus and intensity. While national in scope, each community's PSN task force is working to design and implement a local approach to combat the unique gun crime problem that the area faces. Project Safe Neighborhoods relies on a seamless network of law enforcement professionals, working in concert with local communities, who are utilizing a strategy of cooperation and coordination to prevent illegal gun use, as well as punishing violators and putting criminals who use guns behind bars. Prosecutors pursue the strongest possible punishment for those who violate firearms statutes. Community partners, through services and resources provided by PSN, work to prevent gun violence before it occurs through such efforts as aggressively educating their constituents and at-risk youth about the consequences of gun crime.

Local Successes with PSN. Here are a few examples of Project Safe Neighborhoods working in the Western District of Texas:

In **San Antonio**, on December 5, 2003, 33-year-old Richard Fuentes was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. On July 31, 2003, Fuentes pled guilty to felon in possession of a firearm. On July 28, 2002, a San Antonio Police officer initiated a traffic stop for a speeding violation. The officer arrested Fuentes after determining Fuentes was wanted by authorities on numerous warrants. During an inventory search of the defendant's vehicle, officers recovered a small quantity of cocaine and a loaded Llama .380 caliber pistol which had been reported stolen out of San Marcos, Texas. Fuentes' criminal history reflects a 1991 conviction in Bexar County for burglary of a habitation and 1989 convictions in Bexar County for burglary of a building with intent to commit theft and indecency with a child.

In **San Antonio**, on November 17, 2003, 34-year-old Jesus Humberto Salinas was sentenced to 15 years for being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm and an armed career criminal. On November 21, 2002, a San Antonio Police officer was dispatched to a local bar to investigate two children being left unattended in a motor vehicle for several hours. Salinas, the father of the children, provided police with a false identity. Both he and the mother of the children were initially arrested for public intoxication and failure to identify. A subsequent inventory search of Salinas' vehicle revealed two firearms: 1) hidden under the 1-year-old's car seat, a Smith and Wesson .357 caliber revolver plus a 9" dagger, and 2) on the dash in plain sight, a Tanfoglio .25 caliber pistol. When the 3-year-old child woke up, he told the police officers, "those are just water guns." Salinas' criminal history reflects a conviction for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

In **Austin**, on June 27, 2003, in unrelated cases, Michael David Shelton, Timothy Dale Gould and Anthony Tyrone Perkins were sentenced to 234 months, 141 months and 120 months in federal prison, respectively. On April 16, **Shelton** pled guilty to two counts of bank robbery, one count of carrying a firearm during a crime of violence and conspiracy to carry a firearm during a crime of violence. Shelton stole \$8,506 from two Austin banks. Shelton escaped from the Travis County jail after being arrested. He was recaptured and sentenced to 3 years in state court for the escape to run consecutive to his federal prison term. On May 16, 2003, **Gould** pled guilty to bank robbery and carrying a firearm during a crime of violence after stealing \$55,169 from an Austin branch of Bank of America. On April 8, 2003, a jury convicted **Perkins** for the unlawful possession of a firearm. A loaded .25 caliber pistol was seized from Perkins after he attempted to flee from Austin Police officers seeking to arrest him on outstanding warrants for aggravated robbery. Perkins received the maximum sentence.

In **Waco**, on October 31, 2003, 24-year-old Odis Miles, III, was sentenced to 15 years in federal prison after being convicted of possession with intent to distribute more than five grams of crack cocaine and use of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime. On March 29, 2003, a Waco Police officer arrested Miles following a foot chase. At the time of his arrest, Miles was in possession of a Smith and Wesson .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol, over 47 grams of crack cocaine and \$1,479 in cash.

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In El Paso, Richard William Stefanick faces up to 10 years in federal prison after pleading guilty yesterday to selling firearms to a convicted felon. On April 7, 2001, Stefanick knowingly sold a Smith and Wesson .357 caliber revolver to a convicted felon.

In El Paso, Victor Meneses of El Paso and Daniel Dominguez of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, were sentenced on Wednesday to 18 months and 15 months in federal prison respectively after pleading guilty to charges of making false statements during a firearms purchase. These federal charges are commonly referred to as "straw purchases." A records check revealed that Meneses purchased between thirty and forty firearms from different gun stores in and around El Paso, Texas from 2000 until his arrest on June 26, 2003. As part of each purchase, the defendant was required to complete ATF Form 4473 where he stated that he was the actual purchaser of the firearms. Meneses later admitted to ATF agents that he was purchasing these firearms for other individuals and was paid \$100.00 for each firearm purchased. Dominguez made false and fictitious written statements to an El Paso area pawn shop indicating that he was the actual buyer of at least 14 firearms when in fact he was not. Also, Dominguez represented in writing that he was a resident of the State of Texas for at least 90 days prior to the date of purchase of firearms although he was in fact residing in Mexico. Dominguez was arrested on June 11, 2003 and has been detained since.

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